

HB 1977 -- Reporting of Cruelty

Sponsor: Oxford

This bill changes the laws regarding the reporting of cruelty. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Allows any personal care assistance provider, any mandatory child or elder abuse reporter, or any in-home care provider to report a reasonable suspicion of animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect to the local animal control officer or Department of Agriculture. The reporter can only disclose limited confidential information as is necessary for the local animal control officer or animal welfare program employee to identify the animal's location and status and the owner's name and address;
- (2) Specifies that a person participating in good faith in reporting is immune from any civil or criminal liability that may otherwise result from the reporting. In a proceeding regarding immunity from liability, there is a rebuttable presumption of good faith;
- (3) Adds any local animal control officer or the Department of Agriculture to the list of persons who are allowed access to child abuse investigation records contained in the central registry of the Department of Social Services when there is a reasonable suspicion of animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect;
- (4) Authorizes an employee of a state-funded child or adult protective services agency or other social service agency, while acting in his or her professional capacity, to report known or suspected animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect to the local animal control officer or the Department of Agriculture. A person participating in good faith in reporting is immune from any civil or criminal liability that may otherwise result from the reporting. In a proceeding regarding immunity from liability, there is a rebuttable presumption of good faith; and
- (5) Authorizes an animal control officer to report suspected elder abuse or neglect to the Department of Health and Senior Services or suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services.